

Palatine Church  
State Route 5, two miles west  
of Nelliston  
Nelliston Vicinity  
Montgomery County  
New York

HABS No. NY-364

HABS  
NY,  
29-NEL.V,  
1-

An Addendum to  
Palatine Church  
Nelliston Vicinity, New York  
in HABS Catalog (1941)

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

THE PALATINE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
PALATINE CHURCH VILLAGE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, N.Y.

HABS  
N.Y.  
29-NEL-V,  
1-

OWNER: Lutheran Denomination.

DATE OF ERECTION: 1770

ARCHITECT: Unknown

BUILDER: Work on the church was done by the settlers  
who of necessity, were carpenters and masons

PRESENT CONDITION: Very good.

NUMBER OF STORIES: One story

MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION: Built of stone exterior, interior  
plaster walls and wood trim.

OTHER EXISTING RECORDS: The church was erected largely  
through donations from the Wagner,  
Reber, Hess and Miller families. The  
Miller family paid for the original spire  
and its weathercock, which was regilded  
for the first time in 1880. The women  
folks furnished meals for the workers  
while it was being erected.  
In 1780, Sir John Johnson, with his band  
of red and white raiders, destroyed  
much of the property hereabout. A  
savage prepared to shoot a firebrand  
arrow onto the shingle roof of the  
church and was stopped by a British  
Officer. This Officer had been  
requested by a Tory in Canada to spare  
the church.  
The outside appearance is the same,  
except that of the spire, as when built.  
The original spire was conical, like  
most early Dutch churches, and was  
changed to the present spire early in  
the nineteenth century. About the  
same time the board pulpit and gallery  
were removed and the entrance changed  
from the east side to the south end.  
This was prior to 1870. This was against  
the protest of some of the old residents.  
In 1870 the centennial was celebrated,  
at which Gov. Seymour made an address.

ADDITIONAL DATA:

See Green's "The Old Mohawk Turnpike"  
pages 174 and 175.

## PALATINE CHURCH

An Addendum to  
Palatina Church  
Nelliston Vicinity, New York  
in HABS Catalog (1941)

P. 2  
HABS  
NY,  
29-NEL.V,  
1-

Location: State Route 5, two miles west of Nelliston,  
Nelliston Vicinity, Montgomery County, New York

Present Owner  
and Occupant: The Palatine Society of the Evangelical Lutheran  
Church, Inc., 41 South Perry Street, Johnstown,  
New York

Present Use: Church, shrine, museum, historical archives

Brief Statement  
of Significance: Built in 1770, this is one of the churches built  
by the Germans from the Rhine Valley who settled  
this area, and is maintained as a shrine to them  
by the owners.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The Palatine Society, which now owns the building, was organized and incorporated in 1938. The building was deeded to them by the Lutheran congregation which had built the church, and which, according to the terms of the deed, has perpetual rights to worship in the building. The Palatine congregation is part of the same parish with Trinity Church of Stone Arabia, New York; Reverend Theodore Hammer, pastor.
2. Date of erection: According to a date stone in the upper center of the north side, the church was built in 1770.
3. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original plan of the church is characteristic of the small churches built by the German Protestants at this time, and is similar to other churches built by German immigrants in America, such as Trinity Church in nearby Stone Arabia, New York, or the church in Trappe, Pennsylvania. Characteristics of this type church include: a compact volume; a short rectangular plan with a high pulpit on one long side facing a main entrance on the opposite wall; a non-liturgical arrangement of interior furnishings; galleries, often around three sides; and simple detail and ornament.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: Apparently in the mid-nineteenth century, the main entrance on the long,

east side was closed, the two windows on the south end turned into doors, and the interior remodeled--as recorded on the HABS drawings prepared in 1936 and 1937. The HABS photographs taken in 1962 record the condition of the building following the partial restoration in 1952. For details, see Supplemental Material below.

5. Important old views: A woodcut which appeared in the Lutheran Home Journal for 1860 is reproduced on page 75 of Mattice, The Palatines of New York State. This view shows the church before it was altered, at which time it contained "the ancient balcony, the spiral pulpit and sounding board."
6. Source of information: Paul B. Mattice, Editor, The Palatines of New York State (Johnstown, New York: The Palatine Society, Inc., 1953), pp. 67, 73, 75.

B. Supplemental Material: The following is extracted from a pamphlet available in the church prepared in 1956:

"THE PALATINE SOCIETY is an organization of over 200 members incorporated in 1938 under the Laws of New York State, to preserve the memory and records and Americanism of The Palatiners who came to America in 1709-1710. A few came in 1709 and settled in Newburgh, N. Y. Just about 4,000 men, women and children, left the shores of England in ten ships in January, 1710, for the colony of New York. The last ship arrived at Nutton Island (now Governors Island) in New York Harbor in June, 1710. It was a long and terrible voyage and about 20 percent of their number perished at sea.

"They were of German ancestry. They came from the Rhine Valley as far south as Switzerland. They embarked from Holland for England on the invitation of Queen Anne. They were Protestant in faith--Reformed and Lutheran. As many as 30,000 were in London in 1709, the guests of the Queen and the Board of Trade.

"They left their homeland for a number of reasons--one of which was that they might escape the conditions covering religious and social freedom.

"And the British authorities saw a chance to settle them on the colonial frontier of the Colony, which was at that time the upper Hudson, Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys. Also they were to be engaged in manufacturing pitch, tar and other naval stores for the British navy.

"They were settled on the middle Hudson in October of 1710 by Governor Hunter, on the east side of the river at East Camp (now Germantown) in Columbia County, and on the west side of the river at West Camp, which still bears its original name. They were to repay to the British Crown all expenses incurred in transporting them to America and for their maintenance of food and implements and utensils for their personal use and the carrying on of the project of the pines. And each man, woman and child was to receive eventually 40 acres of land.

"But adequate provision was not at hand; the party in power in England which had conceived the idea, lost its position and the 'distressed Palatines' (as they are called in colonial records) were left quite on their own. There was the direst need. The trees were not of the right kind for the making of naval stores. Dissension arose in their ranks. Colonial leadership failed them. Many left the camps and spread out to the north and south along the Hudson. Some took up the task of living in the Schoharie Valley. And some journeyed to the Mohawk. One group went to Berks County in Pennsylvania.

"From these pioneers have descended thousands and thousands who have helped make America. They gave their lives freely at Oriskany and made possible the capture of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga.

"For the purpose of perpetuating their memory, their ideals, their deeds of valor, and to record their contribution to American life there was organized and incorporated in 1938, 'The Palatine Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Inc.'

"The Society has taken title by deed to the Old Palatine Church Building built in 1770. The deed was issued by the Lutheran Congregation which has worshipped in the building for 185 years. The Congregation has been in continual existence for 203 years. According to the terms of the deed the Congregation will always have the right to worship in the building. It has always been in parish with Trinity Church of Stone Arabia. . . .

"Within the past few years the Shrine has been restored in a remarkable way, inside and outside, to its colonial and pre-Revolutionary appearance.

"Within the past year the windows have been repainted and cleaned, and several leaks in the roof were repaired. In addition to this a Baptismal Font in memory of the Rev. George H. Kling (who left \$100.00 in his will to the Society for this purpose) was installed and the balance of the expense was donated by The Mohawk Valley Lutheran Ministers' Association. . . .

"The Mohawk Valley Lutheran Ministers' Association placed a new sign in front of the church which reads as follows: 'Palatine Church, Evangelical Lutheran. Founded 1749--Erected 1770. The Shrine of Lutheranism in the Mohawk Valley.' . . .

"Mr. and Mrs. Lewis M. Fowler of The Palatine Dyeing Company of St. Johnsville have made most of the restoration possible through a gift of \$21,000. The old entrance, the old windows, the old ceiling have been replaced together with a new roof and repairs to the tower.

"Mr. M. S. Somers of New York City and his sister, Mrs. Robert L. Dawson, of Johnstown, have made a gift of a replica of the old colonial pulpit at a cost of \$3,100. They are the great grandchildren of the Rev. Pater Nicholas Sommer, the founder of the congregation over 200 years ago.

"The Tillapaugh Family Association has presented lovely Offering plates of brass. Mrs. A. W. Tuchings of Gloversville has presented a fine Communion Table in harmony with the interior plan. Mrs. Mabel C. Fowler has recently installed an adequate oil heating system.

"Louis C. Smith, our Treasurer, has made the Society a gift in the amount necessary to refinish the pews. The United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England made possible the repainting of the restored interior by a gift of \$500. . . .

"It is hoped that finally the full plan of restoring the interior can be carried out. It would cost about \$10,000. . . .

"Old records and manuscripts are finding their way into the archives of the Society through gift or loan and will be carefully preserved in the Shrine. . . ."

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
June 1962

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This single-roomed structure is one of the few remaining, restored examples of church architecture by early Protestant immigrants from Northern Europe.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 50'-8" (South front) x 41'; rectangular plan; one story.
2. Foundations: Similar to walls.
3. Wall construction: Rough, random-coursed ashlar, similar foundations. Walls are set back slightly from foundation water table. Light grey-colored stone.
4. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Restored entrance with double, six-paned doors in arched recess with paneled jambs, transom window. (Early photo in Mattica, The Palatines of New York State shows a pedimented doorway, which is not on the restored structure.) Modern entrance stoop. Two plaques above entry: upper, early stone one set in arched niche, and later, rectangular one is of bronze. They date the church 1770.

- b. Windows and shutters: Large, arch-headed windows, double-hung sashes, 32/32. Round windows, with four wooden keys each, in north and south walls.
5. Roof: Gambrel roof, slate.
  - a. Cornice: Modillion cornice.
  - b. Tower: Three receding stages: I--Square, II--Octagonal, III--Octagonal - surmounted by a small, bell-shaped dome and weathercock.
- C. Technical Description of Interiors:
  1. Floor plans: One rectangular room with entrance on long south side and pulpit by opposite west wall. The tower is over the north end.
  2. Flooring: Modern wood floor.
  3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered, white painted walls; roof trusses exposed with white plaster on under side of roof.
  4. Doorways and doors: Six-panel doors.
  5. Trim: Restored high pulpit and woodwork.
  6. Hardware: No original hardware.
  7. Lighting: Electric.
  8. Heating: Modern, oil heating system.
- D. Site:
  1. General setting: Open, rural setting, set close to old highway.
  2. Driveway: Gravel driveway on north side.

Prepared by John C. Poppeliers  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
December 1962